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INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS IN GEOGRAPHY

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In a previous article,¹ mention was made of individual or group assignments. These individual assignments in the classes of the elementary school, especially of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, can be made a potent factor for strong work.

The social instinct of the child rebels against repeating recitations made by other members of the class. But he eagerly adds to those recitations, or offers to search for further information, whenever the opportunity offers. This very eagerness on the part of the child to contribute something of vital interest to the class is the foundation for this individual work. With this impetus the child will work diligently and long that he may entertain well, as he takes great pride in making his contribution worth while.

Although this method can be carried out in all subjects of the elementary school curriculum, geography and history are most easily adapted to it. There is, of course, a certain body of facts that every child must know. But beside all this there is a wide range of geographical knowledge from which the child may select to suit his own taste. Here the teacher should guide the child to cultivate what is best suited to his temperament, and teach him to enjoy much that he had ignored. To guide the child thus, means strenuous effort on the part of the teacher; but such effort pays.

Much work can be saved if a card catalogue containing a list of countries to be studied is kept, as in selecting assignments for one country those for others will be noted.

The material for this work is found in magazines, books of travel, works on art and architecture, series of geographical

¹ November number, p. 113.

stories, some of the classics, and in many United States government publications. With a public library to use the teacher will find little difficulty in making a beginning.

Little can be said as to selection and elimination of material, as each teacher must adapt the subject-matter to her class. After a teacher has selected and organized her material, she must then consider her class and give each pupil an article suited to his particular temperament and so of real interest to him. The child should then study his article and report on it the following day. This report should take the form of a short lecture. The little lecturer should stand before his audience and talk to them, showing any illustrations he may have to emphasize his talk, or dramatizing any of the manners he may choose to.

It is well to have several children give reports from varied sources on a large topic. Then they will be able to organize the reports and work out for themselves that body of facts which must be known.

This method of study will train them to compare and question intelligently the textbooks, and to weigh the evidences of books, magazines, and newspapers. It will teach them where and how to look for information on any given subject. It will also be one aid toward forming good habits in reading for later life.

Its influence on oral language is powerful. In one seventh grade class which I took, not a single child would give a recitation of more than one short choppy sentence. I immediately began individual assignments in the geography and in one month every child could talk for at least five minutes in reporting an article or chapter of a book. At first the vocabulary was meager, pronunciation incorrect, and grammatical construction atrocious. Nevertheless, no child was corrected while talking before the class; but gradually by private discussions the children freed themselves of all this and were able to talk fluently.

Occasionally, written reports are advisable, as a result of the children's own search. The written papers of a meager two or three lines of errors at the beginning of the month changed to one or two pages of fairly well written subject-matter at the end. This shows that when the children have definite and

interesting knowledge on a subject they are able to put it into written expression.

The general results of work of this kind are far-reaching. It oftentimes awakens an interest in the home of the child and shows the parents their opportunities. It broadens the child's horizon so that he appreciates other conditions than his own. It puts a vital life and enthusiasm into the schoolroom that has not existed there before. It makes for general culture not only for the pupil but for the teacher as well.

The illustrations given below are ones which have been used in the seventh grade here within a year. Those of the industries are being worked out as this goes to print. No geographical series nor government publications are on these lists, although they were used and furnish excellent material.

INDUSTRIES

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"Bullfrog and Its Suburbs," *Harper's Weekly*, April 11, 1908, p. 20.

II. GOLD

"Gold and Silver Production of the United States," *Scientific American Supplement*, March 20, 1907, p. 26119.

III. COAL

"How Long Will Our Coal Supply Last?" *Review of Reviews*, September, 1907, p. 335.

"Will Our Coal Reserves Last?" *Review of Reviews*, April, 1907, p. 479.

"Our Great Grandfathers' Coal," *Harper's Weekly*, April 25, 1908, p. 29.

"Coal Reserves of the United States," *Scientific American Supplement*, February 1, 1908, p. 77.

"Advantages of Being a Coal Miner," *Harper's Weekly*, May 16, 1908, p. 31.

IV. PETROLEUM

"A Great American Industry," *Independent*, March 5, 1908, p. 511.

"Petroleum and Its Refinement," *Scientific American Supplement*, May 4, 1907, p. 26195.

"Oil Transportation Industry," *Review of Reviews*, December, 1907, p. 738.

"Standard Oil on Its Industrial Side," *Review of Reviews*, November, 1907, p. 610.

"The Large Corporation," *World's Work*, August, 1908, p. 10571.

"Production of Oil," *Outlook*, September 28, 1907.

V. IRON

"Iron Ore Reserves," *Scientific American Supplement*, March 14, 1908.

"Position Occupied by the United States in the World's Products," *Scientific American*, January 19, 1907, p. 71.

Rocheleau, *Geography of Commerce and Industry*, p. 118.

VI. COPPER

Rocheleau, *Geography of Commerce and Industry*, p. 115.

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I. LIFE, SOCIAL

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"Children of the World," *National Geographical Magazine*, February, 1908.

John Finnemore, *Peeps at Many Lands—India*, chap. xiv, "At the Court of a Native Prince;" chaps. xvii, xviii, "In the Jungle;" chaps. xix, xx, "In an Indian Village."

Herbert Compton, *Indian Life in Town and Country*, chap. iii, "Manners and Customs;" chap. ix, "The Indian at Home."

"Caste, the Curse of India," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, December, 1906.

"Letters from an Indian Bungalow," *Outlook*, September 5 to October 3, 1908.

Stoddard's *Lectures*, Vol. IV.

II. CITIES

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John Finnemore, *Peeps at Many Lands*, chap. i, "The Gateway of India;" chap. xi, "The Sacred City of the Hindoos;" chap. xii, "The Capital of India."

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III. ARCHITECTURE AND ART

"Discoveries of Grandhara Art in British India," *Scientific American*, October 3, 1908.

William E. Curtis, *Modern India*, chap. xiv, "The Architecture of the Moguls;" chap. xv, "The Most Beautiful of Buildings—Taj Mahal."

IV. COMMERCE

- "Canals and Railways," *Scientific American*, April 21, 1906.
 William E. Curtis, *Modern India*, chap. viii, "The Railways of India."
 "A Nation in the Making," *Review of Reviews*, October, 1907.
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 William E. Curtis, *Modern India*, chap. xxix, "Cotton, Tea, Opium."
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V. RELIGION

- "Christianity in India," *Contemporary*, May, 1908.
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 John Finnemore, *Peeps at Many Lands*, chap. xv, "The Religious Mendicants."
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Stanford's Compendium of Geography, Vol. I, chap. x, "The Kingdom of Spain."
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 "Home of Holy Grail," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1907.
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- Washington Irving, *The Alhambra*, "The Journey;" "The Palace;" "The Mysterious Chambers;" "The Court of Lions."
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III. PEOPLE

- Our Little Spanish Cousins*, chap. ii, "School Days;" chap. iii, "Visit to Hacienda;" chap. vi, "The Holidays;" chap. vii, "Easter in Seville;" chap. x, "Games and Sports."

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I. ST. PETERSBURG

- M. H. Wade, *Our Little Russian Cousins*, pp. 10-12, "Origin of St. Petersburg."
 E. R. Shaw, *Big People and Little People of Other Lands*, pp. 73, 74, "The Ice Palace."

- Taylor, *Northern Travel in Greece and Russia*, chap. xxx, "The Kremlin;" chap. xxxiv, "The Palaces of St. Petersburg."
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- "The Power behind the Czar," *Independent*, March 19, 1908, pp. 610-20 (long).
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- Shaw, *Big People and Little People of Other Lands*, pp. 50-55, "The Crowning of the Czar."
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- I. Hapgood, *Russian Rambles*, pp. 220-28, "Catacombs in Cathedral of the Assumption."
- Taylor, *Northern Travels in Greece and Russia*, pp. 296, 297.
- Shaw, *Big People and Little People of Other Lands*, pp. 28-35, "Cathedrals of Russia."
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- Stoddard's *Lectures*, Vol. VI, pp. 237-42.
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VI. LITERATURE

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VII. OCCUPATIONS

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VIII. THE EUROPEANIZATION OF RUSSIA

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IX. PASSING UPON RUSSIAN FINANCES

- Review of Reviews*, July, 1908, p. 28.